

11 February 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Contact with Reverend Janis CILNIS

1. Having learned from Rev. [redacted] that subject named person resides in Portland, Oregon and ministers to the spiritual needs of the local Latvian community, the undersigned requested authority from Headquarters (by TWA from the CO office in San Francisco) to contact [redacted] procure PEX information from him and attempt to enlist his services as a spotter of prospective [redacted] agents. This authority was granted in a telephone conversation between [redacted] and the undersigned.

2. CILNIS was actually contacted by [redacted] the resident agent in [redacted] (who works under the direction of the CO office in [redacted]). On 2 February 1955 [redacted] contacted CILNIS identifying himself as a representative of the U.S. Government and using his true name; he asked CILNIS to accompany him to the CO office for a discussion with another U.S. Government official whom CILNIS had known in the past. CILNIS arrived and recognized the undersigned immediately. It should be pointed out that the undersigned had dealt with CILNIS in two respects during 1949 and 1950 when the undersigned was associated with the Displaced Persons Commission in Germany:

- a. In connection with CILNIS' application for immigration to the U.S. under the D.F. Act of 1949 an anonymous denunciation was received by the undersigned which stated that CILNIS had visited a number of Latvians jailed for various offenses and attempted to persuade them to return to the homeland occupied by the Communists. The investigation that the undersigned conducted as a result of this denunciation disclosed that there was no basis of fact to this allegation. Moreover, CILNIS, in his capacity as pastor ministering to the spiritual needs of jailed Latvian nationals in the Schleswig-Holstein area had attempted to dissuade a number of them from repatriating although in cases where his attempts at dissuading them had failed, he had no other alternative but to bid them Godspeed. It must also be mentioned that anonymous denunciations in those days were rather common and not the exception; for some unknown reason the D.F. in Germany had contracted the illness of slander, deceit, jealousy, and even blackmail to an unbelievable extent. In some cases it was determined that the mere fact that one Latvian was permitted to immigrate to the U.S. sufficed for another to become sufficiently jealous to pin a completely baseless denunciation on his friend and neighbor.

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT

Declassified and Approved for Release
by the Central Intelligence Agency
Date: 2005

EXEMPTIONS Section 3(b)

- (2)(A) Privacy ☐
(2)(B) Methods/Sources ☒
(2)(G) Foreign Relations ☐

74-6-34-1-
[redacted]

- b. Just prior to Reverend ERNSTSON's departure from the Transit Center where the undersigned had his office, the former introduced his successor, the subject, to the undersigned. Although the undersigned did not have as much contact with CILNIS as he had with his predecessor, the former will recall the undersigned immediately when he came face to face with him.

3. In discussions of conditions as they exist in the Latvian community in the general area of Portland, CILNIS related a story fairly similar to that of ERNSTSON; his narrative paralleled that of ERNSTSON's story of his early struggles because CILNIS had fairly recently arrived in Portland from Boulder, Colorado and is just at the point of organizing his congregation into a well-knit Latvian social and spiritual group. Unfortunately the Latvian community in Portland is not sufficiently large to support a minister full-time and, therefore, CILNIS has been forced to turn to the Missouri Synod which has promised him a full-time salary beginning 1 March 1955. This CILNIS feels--and he is really looking forward to it--will enable him to devote all his energy to his profession. Up to now he has been hampered in his efforts by a menial job he now holds in a furniture factory where he is employed as a polisher of furniture.

4. Although CILNIS did not have a complete list of all Latvians in that area he promised to provide one by mailing it to the undersigned as soon as he can.

5. There was little difficulty in obtaining sufficient biographic data on CILNIS for the completion of Part I which is attached hereto.

6. On the second evening (3 February 1955)--when the undersigned had sufficiently assessed CILNIS and was reasonably sure that he would consent to help the U.S. Government--the question of placing all eligible Latvians into three categories was discussed and his aid in such an undertaking solicited. CILNIS consented with what seemed to be no reservation whatever and, in fact, indicated that he was rather pleased to hear that the U.S. Government has sufficient foresight and is engaging in this type of long-range planning.

7. For the purpose of providing the undersigned with the requested data CILNIS was furnished with the following letter-head:

□
□
□
□
□

8. A photograph of CILNIS was made, the negative of which as well as two prints are attached hereto.

9. Without any hesitation, but quite impressed, □ □ signed a secrecy agreement in Latvian copy of which is attached hereto, and promised faithfully to abide by it.

□ □

24-634-1-164

1